

Aruba's ONLY English newspaper

Local legend: How Aruba got its name



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LIVE ENTERTAINMENT 7 DAYS A WEEK

PROFESSIONAL COMPLIMENTARY
PICTURES ON TUESDAY AND FRIDAY



SUNDAY:

MARRYBELL MADURO
SINGER
6:30 - 8:30pm

MONDAY:

ANGELA FLORES
VIOLINIST
6:30 - 8:30pm

TUESDAY:

JEAN PAUL
SAXOPHONIST
6:30 - 8:30pm

WEDNESDAY:

EDDIE KROON
SINGER 4:00 - 6:00pm
MAILLEYN ALVARADO
VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm

THURSDAY:

MARRYBELL MADURO
SINGER
6:30 - 8:30pm

FRIDAY:

RICKY THOMAS
GUITARIST
7:00 - 9:00pm

SATURDAY:

EDDIE KROON
SINGER
4:00 - 6:00pm



WATER'S EDGE
RESTAURANT & BAR



costa linda
beach resort

KARAOKE 9:00 - 11:00pm

Happy Hour
12 - 1 / 4 - 6 / 9 - 10

**PREMIUM
BRANDS**

ANGELA FLORES
VIOLINIST
6:30 - 8:30pm

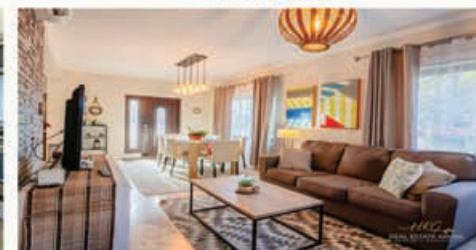
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Featured properties

Jardines del Mar - Eagle Beach \$ 595,000
2 bed 2.5 bath

Blue 536 - Eagle Beach \$785,500
2 bed 2 bath

Diamante 6 - Gold Coast \$655,000
3 bed 3 bath



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Trump adds Europe to the list of U.S. trade partners he's threatening with tariffs

By **JOSH BOAK** and **RAF CASERT**
Associated Press
WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP)

— President-elect Donald Trump on Friday added the 27 countries that make up the European Union to the list of trade partners he's threatening with tariffs unless the group takes steps to import more U.S. goods. "I told the European Union that they must make up their tremendous deficit with the United States by the large scale purchase of our oil and gas," Trump posted shortly after 1 a.m. on social media. "Otherwise, it is TARIFFS all the way!!!"

In 2023, the United States' trade imbalance with the EU on goods was \$209 billion, according to the Census Bureau. There were \$576 billion in imports from Europe and \$367 billion in exports from the United States.

Trump's transition team did not respond to questions seeking greater clarity on the message, which for all its bluntness was unclear on next steps.

When Trump threatened



President-elect Donald Trump speaks during a news conference at Mar-a-Lago, Monday, Dec. 16, 2024, in Palm Beach, Fla.

Canada and Mexico with 25% tariffs in November, the leaders of both countries spoke with him to try and resolve any tensions. But the European Union lacks a single figure who can make the purchase commitments of natural gas and oil on behalf of its 27 member states that Trump is seeking. EU Commission spokesman

Olof Gill said in reaction to Trump's post that "we are ready to discuss with President-elect Trump how we can further strengthen an already strong relationship, including by discussing our common interests in the energy sector."

Gill noted that the EU is already "committed to phasing out energy imports from

Russia and diversifying our sources of supply. We're not going to go into any details about what that might entail in the future, given that the new administration isn't even in place yet."

Scott Lincicome, a vice president at the libertarian Cato Institute, said it was difficult to parse what

Associated Press

Trump was trying to say relative to European trade, given that natural gas exports to the continent are already up after Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

"What we really need to chalk all of this up to is Trump laying the groundwork for future negotiations," Lincicome said. "This is for better or worse a lot of what we're going to see for the next four years."

While there is a \$209 billion trade imbalance, a more complicated relationship lies beneath those numbers. A company such as German automaker BMW can import parts needed to assemble vehicles at its factory in South Carolina, such that the trade totals also reflect the flow of goods within European companies that employ U.S. workers.

More than half of the liquefied natural gas imported by the EU and the United Kingdom in 2023 came from the United States, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. The volume of LNG going to the EU and UK has tripled since 2021. □

Immigration agency deports highest numbers since 2014, aided by more flights

By **VALERIE GONZALEZ AND ELLIOT SPAGAT**
Associated Press

McALLEN, Texas (AP) — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement deported more than 270,000 people to 192 countries over a recent 12-month period, the highest annual tally in a decade, according to a report released Thursday that illustrates some of the financial and operational challenges that President-elect Donald Trump will face to carry out his pledge of mass deportations.

ICE, the main government agency responsible for removing people in the country illegally, had 271,484 deportations in its fiscal year ended Sept. 30, nearly double from 142,580 in the same period a year earlier.

It was ICE's highest deportation count since 2014, when it removed 315,943 people. The highest it reached during Trump's first term in the White House was 267,258 in 2019.

Increased deportations, including on weekends, and streamlined travel procedures for people sent to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador fueled the increase, ICE said. The agency had its first large flight to China in six years and also had planes stop in Albania, Angola, Egypt, Georgia, Ghana, Guinea, India, Mauritania, Romania, Senegal, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Also Thursday, U.S. Customs and Border Protection said authorities made 46,612 arrests for crossing the bor-

der illegally from Mexico in November, down 18% from 56,526 a month earlier and more than 80% from an all-time high of 250,000 in December 2023. Arrests fell by half when Mexican authorities increased enforcement within their own borders a year ago and by half again when President Joe Biden introduced severe asylum restrictions in June. The November numbers were the lowest since July 2020 and indicate that a widely anticipated spike after Trump was elected president didn't happen immediately.

Over the 12-month period ended Sept. 30, Mexico was the most common destination for deportees (87,298), followed by Guatemala (66,435) and Hon-

duras (45,923), the ICE report said. Mexico and Central American countries are expected to continue to bear the brunt of deportations, partly because those governments more readily accept their respective citizens than some others and logistics are easier.

Still, ICE's detention space and staff limited its reach

as the number of people it monitors through immigration courts continued to mushroom. The agency's enforcement and removals unit has remained steady at around 6,000 officers over the last decade while its caseload has roughly quadrupled to 7.6 million, up from 6.1 million in the last year alone. □



A boy looks through a border wall separating Mexico from the United States, Nov. 26, 2024, in Tijuana, Mexico.

Associated Press

EPA head Regan, who championed environmental justice, to leave office Dec. 31

By **MATTHEW DALY**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Michael Regan, who has led the Environmental Protection Agency throughout President Joe Biden's four-year term, said Friday he will leave the agency Dec. 31, about three weeks before Biden leaves office. In a letter to agency employees, Regan said he was proud of the EPA's work to confront climate change, restrict air and water pollution and spend tens of billions of dollars under the administration's landmark climate law to spur clean energy development. Those efforts slashed harmful greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants that endanger communities, "delivering significant economic and public health benefits in areas long overburdened by pollution," he said. The agency also created thousands of jobs and lowered costs for families, he said. Regan, the first Black man to head the EPA, noted that the agency elevated the role of environmental justice under his watch and "placed it at the center of



Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan speaks at Howard University, April 25, 2024, in Washington.

Associated Press

our decision-making." Regan went on a "Journey to Justice" tour from Mississippi to Texas in 2021. The five-day trip from Jackson, Miss., to New Orleans and Houston highlighted low-income, mostly minority communities adversely affected by decades of industrial pollution. Regan, 48, a North Carolina native who headed the

state Department of Environmental Quality before taking over at EPA in early 2021, said he will return to the state with his family. Jane Nishida, EPA's assistant administrator for the Office of International and Tribal Affairs, will serve as acting administrator for the final weeks of the term, Regan said. Regan's chief of staff, Dan Utech, will serve

as acting deputy administrator. Regan, who worked at EPA earlier in his career, thanked Biden for naming him to the post, adding: "Ten years ago, I could have never imagined coming back to lead EPA alongside such committed and dedicated staff." In the past four years, the agency has "made huge

strides to remove lead pipes from communities and protect drinking water sources for millions of people in America," Regan wrote. "We have acted on forever chemicals like PFAS to protect families from pollution in the products we use, the water we drink, and in the backyards where our children play." EPA also "reinvigorated enforcement efforts" after four years of environmental rollbacks under former President Donald Trump, "holding polluters accountable and making sure they pay for cleanups of legacy pollution sites across the country," Regan said. EPA has banned dangerous chemicals such as asbestos and trichloroethylene, also known as TCE, and responded to environmental and public health emergencies across the country, including in Asheville, North Carolina, and Tampa, Florida, in just the last year, Regan said. The agency also hired thousands of new employees, including hundreds of scientists who left the agency during the first Trump administration. □

Fentanyl fuels record homeless deaths in Oregon's Multnomah County, home to Portland

By **CLAIRE RUSH**
Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Fentanyl fueled a record number of homeless deaths last year in Oregon's Multnomah County, home to Portland, according to an annual county report released Friday that officials described as showing the peak of the fentanyl crisis in the area. The report found that 456 homeless people died in the county in 2023, the highest number on record and a 45% jump compared to 2022. Last year's deaths included 282 from unintentional drug overdose, more than double the previous year with fentanyl contributing to 89% of those fatalities. The increase in fentanyl-

related deaths among homeless people mirrors national trends, the county said in a news release, and reflects the spread of the substance in recent years from the East Coast across the Western U.S. In 2017, fentanyl was recorded as contributing to the death of one homeless person in the county; by 2023, that number had reached 251. "The devastating toll fentanyl is taking on our community is starkly apparent in this report and it is heart-breaking," Multnomah County Chair Jessica Vega Pederson said in the news release. "This is a moment for our community to grieve alongside more than 450 families who lost loved ones in 2023 and to continue providing and fighting for more

behavioral health, supportive housing and other resources to respond." Methamphetamine also contributed to 81% of 2023 homeless overdose deaths. Multnomah County Health Officer Richard Bruno said the report "hits close to the heart," as many of the people who died were patients that he cared for in clinic. But he added that he remained optimistic about the future, following a local and state emergency declaration to address the fentanyl crisis. "As we are seeing fentanyl overdose deaths decreasing in 2024, we are hopeful that future reports will hold much lower numbers," he said in the news release. Fourteen deaths were due to homicide, and 26 deaths

were attributed to suicide. Twenty-two deaths were transportation-related, with the report noting that homeless people last year were 58 times more likely to die from a transportation-

related injury compared to the county's general population. There were no deaths due to heat and one due to cold exposure, according to the report. □



A homeless person smokes fentanyl on Friday, June 28, 2024, in Portland, Ore.

Associated Press

U.S. civil rights probe faults Philadelphia school district over handling of antisemitism reports

By **MICHAEL RUBINKAM**
 Associated Press

The Philadelphia school district failed to show it protected Jewish students from harassment despite "repeated, extensive notice" that students, teachers and administrators were engaging in antisemitic behavior, the U.S. Department of Education has concluded after a federal civil rights investigation.

Philadelphia school administrators did not adequately address allegations that students were performing Nazi salutes, drawing swastikas on school property and uttering slurs and threats against Jewish students in some cases neglecting to even document the incidents, the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights found. Federal investigators also cited complaints about allegedly antisemitic social media posts by a school board member, an assistant superintendent and four teachers.

The Philadelphia district, among the largest public school systems in the U.S., did not evaluate whether a hostile environment existed in its schools, and did



The School District of Philadelphia headquarters are shown in Philadelphia, Tuesday, July 23, 2024.
 Associated Press

not demonstrate that it took steps to "eliminate any such hostile environment and prevent its recurrence," the civil rights office said in a Dec. 18 letter to the district's lawyers. The letter noted that Philadelphia officials have agreed to take various steps to resolve the case.

The agreement includes annual training for administrators, faculty and staff; age-

appropriate anti-harassment programming for students; better documentation of complaints; and an anti-harassment statement. "The Philadelphia School District has committed to taking essential steps to redress any hostile environment in its schools so that Jewish students, like all students, can learn in an environment free from discriminatory harass-

ment," Catherine E. Lhamon, assistant secretary for civil rights, said in a statement. The Anti-Defamation League, a prominent Jewish advocacy group, was among several Jewish groups to file complaints against the district earlier this year. The Education Department opened an investigation to determine whether district officials appropriately

responded to the alleged harassment as required under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on shared ancestry.

ADL said it hopes the agreement between the Education Department and the school district will help prevent additional harassment and targeting of Jewish students.

"We are grateful for the Jewish students and parents who had the courage to speak out against the pattern of antisemitic harassment, abuse and bullying they were experiencing," said Jonathan Greenblatt, ADL's chief executive officer. ADL has filed similar complaints against other school districts, including Berkeley and Santa Ana in California.

The Philadelphia district said it "takes all complaints of bullying, harassment, and discrimination seriously, including allegations of antisemitism and Islamophobia." The district also said it's committed to "continue efforts to create welcoming and inclusive environments that allow our students to feel safe and heard." □

California regulators vote to delay closure of gas storage facility, site of worst U.S. methane leak

LOS ANGELES (AP) — California regulators have approved a controversial proposal to delay the closure of the Aliso Canyon Natural Gas Facility, the site of

the nation's largest known methane leak, which forced thousands of families from their Los Angeles homes in 2015.

The California Public Utilities

Commission on Thursday voted 4-0, with one commissioner recused, to approve a judge's proposed decision that Aliso Canyon should remain open for the time being, the Southern California News Group reported.

But commissioners said the vote created a pathway to lowering or eliminating reliance on Aliso Canyon in future years by establishing a target for the level of demand for natural gas in Southern California that can be met without the need of the facility. "This decision puts forward a path to the closure of Aliso Canyon that is achievable, realistic, and protective of families and businesses who are struggling to pay energy bills," CPUC President

Alice Reynolds said in a statement. "Huge progress is underway to bring online clean energy resources and drive down demand for natural gas-fired power plants."

Opponents of the facility want it closed immediately. Craig Galanti, a Porter Ranch resident living near Aliso Canyon, was unhappy with the commission's vote.

"Am I surprised? No. Am I disappointed? I'm exceedingly disappointed," he told the news group. "The CPUC continues to support the best interests of the utilities at the expense of the community's health and safety."

The 2015 Aliso Canyon gas leak, which took four months to control, released

more than 120,000 metric tons of methane and other gases into the atmosphere over communities in the San Fernando Valley.

Thousands of residents were forced to move out of their homes to escape a sulfurous stench and maladies including headaches, nausea and nosebleeds. SoCalGas and its parent company, Sempra Energy, agreed to pay up to \$1.8 billion in settlements to more than 35,000 victims in 2021.

Last year, the company reached another settlement with the utilities commission, agreeing to pay more than \$70 million to the Aliso Canyon Recovery Account to address the impacts from the leak on air quality and public health. □



People chant slogans during a protest outside the Aliso Canyon storage facility, in the Porter Ranch section of Los Angeles on May 15, 2016.

Associated Press

U.S. drops \$10M terrorism bounty offered for capture of Syrian rebel leader who ousted Assad

By ABBY SEWELL and MATTHEW LEE

Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) —

The Biden administration said Friday it has decided not to pursue a \$10 million reward it had offered for the capture of a Syrian rebel leader whose forces led the ouster of President Bashar Assad earlier this month.

The announcement followed a meeting in Damascus between the leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, Ahmad al-Sharaa, who was once aligned with al-Qaida, and the top U.S. diplomat for the Middle East, Barbara Leaf, who led the first U.S. diplomatic delegation into Syria since Assad's ouster.

HTS remains designated a foreign terrorist organization, and Leaf would not say if sanctions stemming from that designation would be eased. But, she told reporters that al-Sharaa had committed to renouncing terrorism and as a result the U.S. would no longer offer the reward.

"We discussed the critical need to ensure terrorist groups cannot pose a threat inside Syria or exter-



A man shouts as others wave Syrian 'revolutionary' flags in celebration after Friday prayers at the Umayyad Mosque, in Damascus, Syria, Friday, Dec. 20, 2024.

nally, including to the U.S. and our partners in the region," she said.

"Based on our discussion, I told him that we would not be pursuing the Rewards for Justice reward offered," Leaf said in a telephone news conference from Jordan where she traveled after visiting Syria.

Leaf and other U.S. officials have said al-Sharaa's public statements about pro-

tecting minority and women's rights are welcomed, but they remain skeptical that he will follow through on them in the long run.

"He came across as pragmatic," she said. "It was a good first meeting. We will judge by deeds not just by words."

The U.S. delegation's visit was aimed at pushing for an inclusive government and seeking information on

the whereabouts of missing American journalist Austin Tice.

Along with Leaf, former special envoy for Syria Daniel Rubinstein and the Biden administration's chief envoy for hostage negotiations, Roger Carstens, joined the meetings with interim leaders and members of civil society.

Carstens said there was no new information confirming

Tice's fate or whereabouts but vowed that efforts to find him would continue. He traveled previously to Lebanon to seek information. More U.S. officials are expected to visit Syria in the coming days to pick up the search, he said.

"We're going to be like bulldogs on this," Carstens said, adding that the U.S. was focusing on about six prisons where it believed Tice may have been held in the past. He said the U.S. also had information about three more prisons where Tice might have been incarcerated, and up to 40 sites may end up being examined for evidence of Tice's presence.

Tice, who has had his work published by The Washington Post, McClatchy newspapers and others, disappeared at a checkpoint in a contested area west of Damascus as the Syrian civil war intensified.

A video released weeks after Tice went missing showed him blindfolded and held by armed men and saying, "Oh, Jesus." He has not been heard from since. Assad's government publicly denied that it was holding him. □

Associated Press

Malaysia agrees to resume 'no find, no fee' hunt for flight MH370, 10 years after plane disappeared

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) —

Malaysia's government has agreed in principle to accept a second "no find, no fee" proposal from a U.S. company to renew the hunt for flight MH370, which is believed to have crashed in the southern Indian Ocean more than 10 years ago, Transport Minister Anthony Loke said Friday.

Loke said Cabinet ministers gave the nod at their meeting last week for Texas-based marine robotics firm Ocean Infinity to continue the seabed search operation at a new 15,000-square-kilometer (5,800-square-mile) site in the ocean next year.

"The proposed new search

area, identified by Ocean Infinity, is based on the latest information and data analyses conducted by experts and researchers. The company's proposal is credible," he said in a statement.

The Boeing 777 plane vanished from radar shortly after taking off on March 8, 2014, carrying 239 people, mostly Chinese nationals, on a flight from Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur, to Beijing. Satellite data showed the plane deviated from its flight path to head over the southern Indian Ocean, where it is believed to have crashed.

An expensive multinational search failed to turn up any clues, although debris

washed ashore on the east African coast and Indian Ocean islands. A private search in 2018 by Ocean Infinity also found nothing. Under the new deal, Ocean Infinity will get \$70 million only if significant wreckage is discovered, Loke said.

He said his ministry will finalize negotiations with Ocean Infinity in early 2025. The firm has indicated that January-April is the best period for the search, he said. "This decision reflects the government's commitment to continuing the search operation and providing closure for the families of MH370 passengers," he added.

Ocean Infinity CEO Oliver Punkett earlier this year re-

portedly said the the company had improved its technology since 2018. He has said the firm is working

with many experts to analyze data and narrow the search area to the most likely site. □



Flight officer Rayan Gharazeddine scans the water in the southern Indian Ocean off Australia from a Royal Australian Air Force AP-3C Orion during a search for the missing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370, March 22, 2014.

Associated Press

Australia announces \$118 million deal to enhance policing in Solomon Islands

By ROD MCGUIRK

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)

— Australia announced on Friday it will pay for more police in Solomon Islands and create a police training center in the South Pacific island nation's capital Honiara, where Chinese law enforcement instructors are already based under a bilateral security pact with Beijing.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Australia would spend 190 million Australian dollars (\$118 million) over four years on funding and training new Royal Solomon Islands Police Force recruits with a package that would “reduce any need for outside support.”

“My government is proud to make a significant investment in the police force of the Solomon Islands to ensure that they can continue to take primary responsibility for security in the Solomons,” Albanese told reporters in Australia's capital Canberra.

Albanese and his Solomons



Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese gestures during a press conference at Parliament House in Canberra, Friday, Dec. 20, 2024.

Associated Press

counterpart Jeremiah Manele said in a joint statement on Friday the package would build an enduring security capability in the Solomons, “thereby reducing its reliance on external partners over time.” Australia has been energetically pursuing new bi-

lateral security deals with its Pacific island neighbors since Beijing and the Solomons signed a security deal in 2022 under Manele's predecessor, Manasseh Sogavare.

That deal has created fears among U.S. allies including Australia that the Chinese

navy will be allowed to build a base in the strategically important Solomons. Albanese's Labor Party, which was the opposition at the time the pact was signed, described it as Australia's worst foreign policy failure in the Pacific since World War II.

Australia has recently signed security deals with Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu and Nauru that effectively give Canberra veto powers over any security deals those countries might want to strike with third nations including China.

Asked if the new deal would require the Chinese security presence to be removed from the Solomons, Albanese did not directly answer.

“The Solomon Islands of course is a sovereign nation. They have some measures in place and we expect that to continue,” Albanese said.

“As a result of this agreement, what we've done is make sure that Australia remains the security partner of choice,” he added.

Mihai Sora, a Pacific islands expert at the Lowy Institute, a Sydney-based international policy think tank, said the agreement was a “clear win for Solomon Islands, which has gained a much-needed boost to its law and justice sector.” □

Taiwan lawmakers clash after one party breaks into legislature to occupy speaker's chair

By TAIJING WU and

KEN MORITSUGU

Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Lawmakers clashed in Taiwan's legislature Friday when members of the president's political party who had

broken into the building overnight to occupy the speaker's chair tussled with members of another major party who forced their way in to evict them.

Some lawmakers were injured in the clash, ac-

cording to Taiwan media reports, though it wasn't clear how seriously.

At issue were three bills that the Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang, was trying to push through, including one that critics say would paralyze the Constitutional Court.

The legislature approved two of the bills one on the court that requires at least 10 justices to be present to make a ruling and another that would stiffen the requirements for voter petitions to recall elected officials. The court currently has only eight justices, with seven vacancies.

Debate on the third bill, which would redistribute tax revenues by giving a larger share to local governments, continued into the night.

Lawmakers from the Democratic Progressive Party,

which said the bills threaten Taiwan's democratic system, removed windows to get into the building Thursday night and take over the speaker's area, piling up walls of chairs to block access, Taiwan's Central News Agency said.

Photos and videos of the morning clash showed chaotic scenes with Nationalist members trying to remove or push their way through the barriers of chairs or clamber over a ledge in front of the speaker's area. Lawmakers from the other side shoved them and the chairs back and squirted or flung mineral water at them from plastic bottles.

The Nationalists, wearing matching white windbreakers, eventually took control of the area, allowing the speaker, Han Kuo-yu, to take his position.

The Democratic Progres-

sive Party, known as the DPP, was attempting to block any votes on the bills. Neither they nor the Nationalists, known as the KMT, won a majority in the last legislative election. The KMT, which took slightly more seats, has teamed up with a minor party to take control of the legislature and is jostling for power with Taiwan's president, Lai Ching-te, who is from the DPP.

A DPP leader said in a social media video Thursday night that the party's actions were extreme but that it had no other options, the Central News Agency reported. Negotiations on the bills have failed to resolve differences between the parties.

Thousands of DPP supporters protested outside the legislature on Thursday night and Friday. □



In this image made from video by Taiwan's EBC, Lawmakers from the Democratic Progressive Party and members of the Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang, fight for control of the speaker's chair at the Legislature in Taipei, Taiwan on Friday, Dec. 20, 2024.

Associated Press

Lessons from our elders: Plants and fruits for medicinal use (part 2)



(Oranjestad)—In last week's edition, we shared with our readers some medicinal use for plants and fruits, passed down from our elders through generations. This week, we present two more uses of fruits and plants for medicinal use.

Sweet potato

According to our elders, sweet potato is mostly useful for low blood pressure. People who suffer from low

blood pressure were advised to eat sweet potato 2 to 3 times a week. However, if you have high blood pressure, it is best not to eat too much sweet potato, as this raises blood pressure. Sweet potatoes are also great for people who work hard labor jobs, and it's been said to be aid blood circulation in the body, as well as help those with hemorrhoids or diarrhea. Many of our elders opted to

plant sweet potatoes themselves, mostly because of how easy it was to do so. Cut the end of a sweet potato let it sit in shallow water until it starts to sprout. Then you may plant it in the ground. Sweet potatoes need plenty of water to grow, especially in the first week in the ground. It was said that once you start to notice the ground crack underneath the flowers, it is time to harvest. This should happen around month 3.

Pomegranate

Pomegranates are also one of the easier fruits to plant and harvest. Originated from Persia, this plant can grow almost everywhere. In Aruba, there are many homes that have a tiny or big pomegranate tree. You may be wondering what the difference is between a small and big pomegranate tree, for



which the answer is based on harvest time. Tiny trees produce tinier pomegranates that can be harvested early on. Contrarily, big trees produce bigger pomegranates, but they need enough time to fully ripen before harvesting, otherwise you might end up with bitter seeds. Pomegranate trees are also very easy to plant. In essence, if you just throw the seeds on the ground, they could grow into a tree.

In terms of medicinal use, pomegranate skins are

said to have a few benefits for our health. According to customs, pomegranate skin tea can help those that suffer from diarrhea. Dried pomegranate skin tea is also good for people who have worms. Pomegranate flowers can be boiled to make a drink and this can be used for irritated gums; just take a swig and let the tea sit in your mouth for a couple minutes. □

Source: Remedi i Kustumber di nos Bieunan (Medicine and Customs of our Elderly) by Dinah Veeris

In celebrating 200 years of Oranjestad... Learn about the history of the famous town hall!

(Oranjestad)—If you've ever taken a stroll through main street Oranjestad, you may have stumbled upon a big green house with beautiful colonial design. This legendary house, now used as a town hall for civil marriages, was once owned by a wealthy doctor and formed part of the elite neighborhood in Oranjestad.

Jacobo Eloy Arends was an Aruban physician, and in lived in Oranjestad during the 1920s. In 1922, he married Maria Monica Lacle, the daughter of well-known business man at the time, Adriaan Lacle. The two lived a posh life in the city center, and their mansion—once the center for neighborhood par-

ties—now serves as a public town hall for civil marriages and is a cultural monument on the island.

The house was designed by architect Chibi Wever, and constructed under the leadership of famous master carpenter, Dada Picus, who was famous at the time for his construction of beautiful buildings.

The construction of the house started once Jacobo and Maria got engaged. It is said that during the time of construction, Maria was not allowed to see the building nor be anywhere near the construction site. It wasn't until after her honeymoon that she saw the completed mansion for the first time, furnished

entirely by her sisters-in-law.

The mansion also contained the doctor's office, as well as a pharmacy. After the death of Jacobo, the house was inherited by his son, an Aruban dentist, who converted Jacobo's office into his own dental practice. Over the years, the house was rented and used by third parties, but eventually fell into disrepair, as the maintenance cost became too high to cover.

The land was sold to Land Aruba in 1986, but it did not see a renovation until 1997. Nowadays, it serves to host weddings, and is attached to a modern building situated behind—the Aruban census office.

Jacobo and Maria's mansion was situated in front of another famous mansion, owned by Jacobo's brother Frederico Maximiliaan (Machi) Arends. Frederico was married to Veneranda (whom the mansion was named after). Their house was also constructed by Dada Picus, utilizing Veneranda's design vision that was inspired by a house she saw in Cartagena, Colombia.

Nowadays, this mansion lies in ruins.



However, the Aruban government recently announced its official restoration, with plans to convert this monument into a governmental office and public space for visitors of Oranjestad. □

Source and pictures credited to: "De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over the geschiedenis van Aruba)" by Evert Bongers.



Celebrating Forty Years - 1,600,000 Point Giveaway Every Friday, Saturday & Sunday

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 starting at 1pm!
 \$7 for 4-Card BINGO | 8 Games to Play
\$1,500 in Cash Prizes
SPECIAL PROGRESSIVE GAME
 Jackpot within 50 Calls | 51 Calls or more \$111
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- 200 Minutes on-net to Fixed and Mobile
- 30 Minutes to other providers and International
- 50 SMS Local and International
- Valid for 7 Days
- For only \$30

Tourist Bundles - 14 Days (70GB)

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- 75GB Data
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- \$55.50

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Feeling parched? Grab refreshment by the side of the road!



(Oranjestad)—Touring the island in the blistering heat can leave one feeling rather thirsty and looking to cool off. Luckily there are a few stands along the roads of Aruba that can offer you just what you need: a nice, refreshing beverage!

These "coconut stands" can be found at several locations on the island, where you can cool off with delicious smoothies, drinks, snacks, and of course, fresh coconuts! Perfect during family outings around the island, these stands can be found in the following locations:

- Near the red Anchor in San Nicolas
- On the Linear Park in Oranjestad (in front of airport runway)
- At the California Light House hill
- Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruin
- Bushiribana Beach (Near the Ling & Song Supermarket) ☐

JOIA Aruba by Iberostar opens on Eagle Beach

Luxury and Island Stewardship converge in Iberostar's first hotel in Aruba

Aruba—Iberostar Hotels & Resorts, the globally recognized Spanish hotel brand, has officially opened JOIA Aruba by Iberostar, its first hotel in Aruba. Located on the pristine shores of Eagle Beach — ranked as the #1 beach in the Caribbean — this five-star resort offers an unparalleled blend of luxury accommodation, sustainability, and a celebration of the island's natural heritage.

Iberostar Group's commitment to promoting and continuing to lead the path in responsible tourism will be palpable in this hotel. With this new opening, Iberostar is applying the seven pillars of its Wave of Change strategy to promote circularity, nature and biodiversity protection, climate action and destination stewardship amongst other initiatives.

The U-shaped architectural design of JOIA Aruba by Iberostar frames the crystal-clear waters of the Caribbean, providing breathtaking ocean views from every guest room. Committed to responsible tourism, Iberostar has integrated eco-friendly practices and innovative energy solutions throughout the property, setting a new standard for sustainable hospitality. "At our 240-suite resort, we have embraced sustainability at every level, from the use of locally sourced, recyclable materials — including the walls of the building — to the Aruban inspired design elements that celebrate the island's rich culture. With interiors crafted for comfort and resource preservation, and innovative amenities like organic products and energy-efficient airflow systems, we are redefining responsible luxury while eliminating single-use plastics. Worth mentioning the hotel is open to the local community, that is welcome to taste our restaurants, spa, bars and the hotel itself," explained Arnaud Le Lanchon, JOIA Aruba by Iberostar general manager.

In addition to luxurious accommodation, JOIA Aruba by Iberostar offers world-class dining with three signature restaurants, open to both guests and the local community. The culinary offerings include a buffet-style breakfast venue that at night transforms into a signature restaurant specialising in Italian Cuisine, a Modern Caribbean cuisine restaurant, and a specialized Surf and Turf open-fire grill concept. Four bars, including a swim-up bar and a gastropub, provide diverse options for relaxation and entertainment. The resort will also boast an array of amenities, including a 10,000-square-foot convention center capable of hosting up to 400 guests, a full-service spa, a fitness center, two swimming pools with Bali beds, and designated spaces for weddings and events. For adventure seekers,



the hotel offers access to nearby golf courses, tennis courts, and a variety of island excursions, from snorkeling to e-bike services on the boulevard.

Beyond its facilities, JOIA Aruba by Iberostar has a deep intention to be an integral part of the island's fabric, through initiatives like the Aula di Lama (Ocean Classroom). This innovative, multifunctional space will serve as a collaborative hub for immersive environmental education, fostering awareness and action among schools and the wider community.

Meanwhile, the Shoco Sanctuary at Tierra del Sol Golf Course by Iberostar highlights Iberostar's ongoing commitment to biodiversity. Established in partnership with Aruba Birdlife Conservation, this project has been dedicated to protecting the Aruba Burrowing Owl (Shoco) since its launch in 2019. The sanctuary has made a significant impact by supporting 20% of the island's Shoco population, ensuring the preservation of this cherished national symbol. These efforts collectively underscore Iberostar's vision for sustainable tourism, creating a lasting positive impact on Aruba's natural and cultural heritage.

The opening of JOIA Aruba by Iberostar marks a milestone for Iberostar Hotels & Resorts as it continues to expand its footprint in the Caribbean while maintaining its dedication to responsible tourism. The resort will celebrate its Grand Opening Ceremony in 2025, showcasing the completion of all amenities and officially introducing JOIA Aruba by Iberostar as a leader in luxury hospitality on the island.

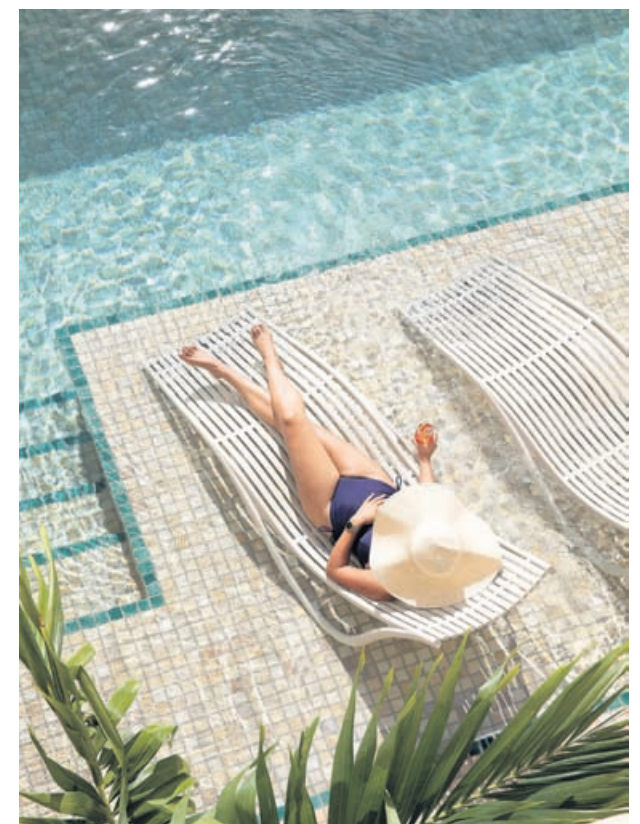
About the Iberostar Group

Iberostar Group is a 100% family-owned Spanish multinational company with a rich history of over 67 years in the tourism industry and business origins dating back to 1877. It currently has two divisions: Iberostar Hotels & Resorts, its hotel division and largest business unit, whose portfolio totals 100 4- and 5-star hotels in 14 countries; and World2Meet, its travel division, a vertically

structured tourism group comprising 17 brands specialising in the entire tourism value chain.

The Group has earned recognition for its efforts in promoting a responsible tourism model that prioritizes the well-being of both people and the environment. With quality and sustainability embedded throughout the business, the company positions the circular economy as the cornerstone of its strategy. Pursuing its own 2030 Agenda, goals include becoming waste-free by 2025, attaining carbon neutrality by 2030, ensuring complete responsibility in its seafood supply chain by 2025, and enhancing the health of the ecosystems that surround its hotels, among other objectives.

Iberostar Group has a global team of over 35,000 people from 95 different nationalities. Their unwavering commitment to quality serves as a key differentiator, driving continuous improvement, innovative products, and exceptional customer service. □



Snakes you may encounter on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—If you have ever or will ever go off-roading on the island, you may encounter three types of snakes that are dominant on the island. The Cascabel, Santanero and Boa differ from each other in a couple ways, and local perspective on each one may help you understand what you need to do if you ever were to encounter one during your touring session on the island.

Cascabel (*Crotalus unicolor*)

The small Cascabel or Aruba Island Rattlesnake averages 70 cm in length. The body color is often uniform gray or light brown. There may be a faint pattern of diamond shaped markings on the back. This pattern is most noticeable on younger snakes. The most distinctive feature of this snake is the rattle at the end of its tail which makes a buzzing sound when the snake is alarmed. Cascabels are shy and not aggressive, but their venom can be dangerous to humans. In fact, it's the only venomous snake native to the island. It is best to leave this snake alone. Do not attempt to catch or kill it, as it could not only be dangerous, but this snake is also endemic to the island, and its preservation has become a legal mandate for all residents and visitors.

Cascabels hunt by waiting under bushes and fruiting trees to catch passing lizards, mice, rats, small rabbits, and an occasional bird. This is often considered to be one of the rarest rattlesnakes in the world. The range of the Cascabel is restricted to the rugged and mountainous areas of the island mostly within Arikok National Park. The Arikok National Park was designated in the early 1980s to include most of the rattlesnake's population, providing a safe refuge in which the snake can be protected and monitored. The government has also implemented outreach and education initiatives to change local perception of the snake and highlight its ecological and economic importance – it

is now being promoted as a national symbol. Arikok's partnership with the Toledo zoo has safeguarded the rattlesnake ex-situ and led to a number of research projects collecting critical data on the Cascabel's abundance, life history and habitat requirement to help guide future conservation efforts.

Santanero

The slender Santanero or Aruban Cat-eyed Snake is a small fella, typically less than 50 cm long. This snake is recognizable by the large scales on the top of its head and by its pattern of dark brown bands alternating with light brown bands. The belly is plain white or cream colored without any markings. Native as well to the island, this snake is shy and not aggressive. However, it has enlarged teeth at the back of its mouth and mild venom which is not dangerous to humans, but can paralyze small lizards and frogs. Santaneros are most active at night when they search for food. During the day, they hide under rocks or leaves. They frequently climb trees and cactus. Santaneros eat toads, frogs, insects, and lizards. You may find Santaneros near dams during periods of rainy weather or crossing roads at night. This snake is found island wide. A Santanero in your garden will keep away the unwanted insects. If you encounter a Santanero around your garden, please do not harm this species.

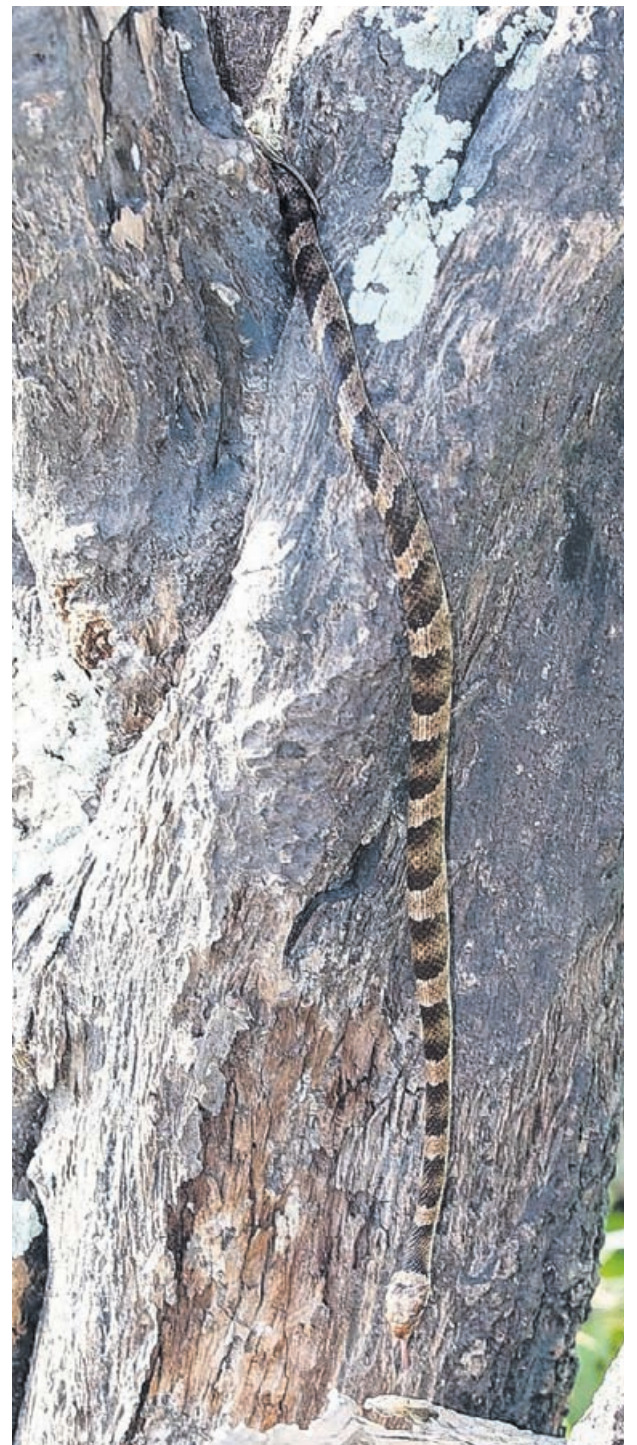
Boa (*Boa constrictor*)

Boas are Aruba's largest snakes. The longest Boa found on the island was slightly less than 3 m. Newborn Boas average 35 cm. Boas are not venomous but are what is called constrictor snakes; they kill by wrapping themselves around a prey and suffocating them. The most distinctive feature of a Boa is its pattern of dark brown and tan blotches which become red toward the tail. The belly is white or cream colored with numerous black spots. Boas are excellent



climbers and may be found in trees and cactus. Boas also hide in the leaves under bushes waiting to catch prey that pass. Boas catch their prey with their teeth and then constrict it in their coils. The Boa's diet consists of birds, lizards, rats, mice, and rabbits. Large Boas have been known to eat small goats and chickens. When threatened, Boas will hiss loudly.

Boas are a non-native species and are invasive to the island, risking the population of native lizards and birds. The first Boas were reported on the island in 1999. Since that time they have been found across the entire island in all types of habitats. If you ever encounter a Boa, please do not approach it. Instead, please call the Arikok National Park, as they are experienced in handling Boas. □



Aruba: the legend behind its name



(Oranjestad)—Most folkloric tales and legends in Aruba revolve around our indigenous ancestors, who came from mainland Venezuela, and discovered the island and made it into their new home. This particular legend tells the story of the birth of the Aruba name.

The legend follows the life of Arua, an indigenous Cacique originally from Aroa in the Falcon state in Venezuela in the year 50 AD. Arua had a son around the year 70 AD with his wife Shira, who they named Corobori. When Corobori was old enough, he joined his father on the usual boat trip to the islands of Curacao and Bonaire to gather salt.

On their way back to Mainland Venezuela, they were caught up in a heavy rain storm—a side effect from a passing, but far away, hurricane. Of course, because of the lack of motors and sail, their boat was left in the mercy of the heavy winds. After a while, the storm started to pass, and the clouds began to clear up. Finally able to see around them, the Cacique spotted land approximately an hour away. So, they started to row in that direction until they reached the coast.

Once they arrived on what they thought was Venezuela, they decided to stay the night and fix their kayak. The next morning, the Cacique ordered his son and a few warriors to go find any sign of population in the area: "Corobori," Arua said. "Don't come back without news. It's in your hands how long we stay here till we find our family. So, if you need to take a week to gather information, we will wait for you."

"Don't worry," Corobori replied. "As soon as we have any information, we will let you know." Armed with arrows and spears, backpacks filled with food and water containers, they set off. They climbed several small hills, but no sign of a village. They crossed different dry riverbeds, but no sign of anything. When the sun finally descended, they found themselves near a fairly tall hill and decided to climb it for a better view of a village. This hill was called Pan Dushi or Orcuyo, which today we call Hooiberg.

The next morning, they could clearly see that they have landed on an island, but an unfamiliar one at that. When Corobori went back to where his father was waiting, he told him the news: "Father Arua, you have just discovered an island, but it is not Curacao or Bonaire. Far in the south, we saw the big mountains of our homeland Venezuela, which we could have never seen on the other island. This leads us to believe we are on a new island. But that's not all. When the sun came up, we saw in the distance a glowing plain, which we think may be salt."

The Cacique was pleased to hear of his son's findings. He decided to stay a couple days on the newly-discovered island in search for salt. The next morning they ascended Hooiberg again and stayed to see if they could find nearby smoke, indicating an inhabitant village. But they found nothing. So they went back to their initial arrival settlement, now known as Santo Largo in Savaneta. The next morning they hiked along the Spaans Lagoen near the Mangel Halto Beach and reached the area of Bushiri. There, they boarded their kayaks and heading to what we know now as Malmok, where they found rocks of salt. After a couple days of exploring the island and gathering some salt rocks, they left for Venezuela, where they were reunited with their families.

Throughout the year, they travelled back and forth to Aruba, collecting salt. After a while they settled on the island, generations of families living along the coast. Corobori was the first indigenous inhabitant in our history to explore the entirety of the island.

Arua, after decades as the leader of his tribe, spent his last days on the island. Having reached 80 years old, he called for his family on his death bed. In his hammock, he said: "My children, many years have passed, and I've asked my warrior to bring me back to the island so I can laid to rest. The God of living has given me the gift of life to see my son, grandchildren and great grandchildren. But now he is calling me home. Corobori, my torch is now passed to you. Guide our people, and be the leader you were always meant to become. If one day you leave my island, do not forget that it is also yours. This is my last wish: When I die, bury me in our maize plantation."

And so when the Cacique passed away, his wishes were granted and he was laid to rest in the area we now know as the Paradera Cemetery. Where he used to live, they built the Paradera Church.

And that is the tale of what inspired the Aruba name. In the generations that lived or travelled back and forth to the island, there were many familiar names*, like Guadiriki, a warrior who was there when the island got discovered and his son, whom he called Huliba; Corobori and his children, Corodori, Camacuri and Turibana, Masiduri; and Malmok, the 13-year-old boy who alerted the Cacique when the Caribes attacked.

Familiar names: all these names are familiar to Arubans, as these are the names of places and plants on the island.

Source: Un storia di e Indjan Arua (A story of the Indian Arua) by Adolf (Dufi) Kock



CROSSWORD

By **THOMAS JOSEPH**

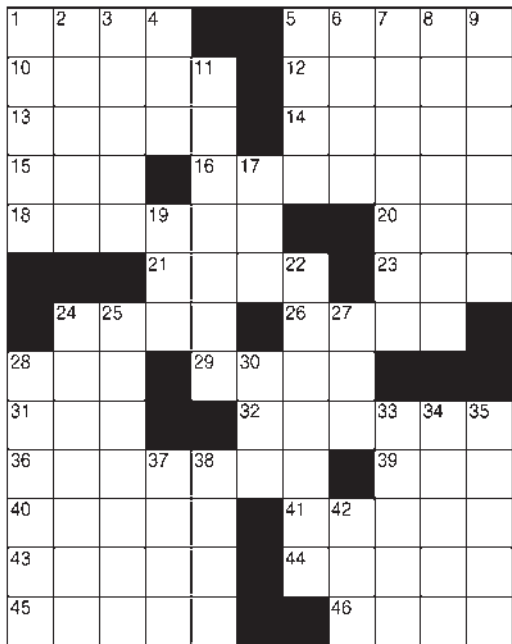
ACROSS

- 46 Quite
- 1 Lot unit
- 5 Shiny finish
- 10 Hitching tool
- 12 Sold for
- 13 Slow tempo
- 14 Fighting words
- 15 "Exodus" hero
- 16 England's Churchill
- 18 Cold time
- 20 Galoot
- 21 Inkling
- 23 Obtain
- 24 Source of cents
- 26 Call for
- 28 La Brea stuff
- 29 Painter Dix
- 31 Musician Yoko
- 32 Target for Jack Frost
- 36 Painter Homer
- 39 Skating surface
- 40 Gladden
- 41 Island greeting
- 43 Type a password, perhaps
- 44 Contract add-on
- 45 Cleaned, in a way

DOWN

- 1 Attorney follower
- 2 Dear, in Dijon
- 3 Quarrel
- 4 CPR pro
- 5 Amused look
- 6 Back muscles
- 7 Facing the audience
- 8 Bent over
- 9 Bard's work
- 11 Greeted deferentially
- 17 Hot blood
- 19 Pewter component
- 22 Dove's stance
- 24 "Mandy" singer
- 25 It began about 1000 B.C.
- 27 Long, long time
- 28 Locker room
- 30 Tango need
- 33 Radio part
- 34 Earthy color
- 35 Tired
- 37 Word on an octagon
- 38 Given for a time
- 42 Tyler of "Armageddon"

ALASKA AS IF
LENTIL UNDO
POTATO POOR
SEESAW
FISH TIBET
ANN SWOREBY
UNO TARTLOP
NEWYORK LOO
ARBOR ASKS
ADMITS
AXLE BATAAN
TILL ICICLE
MISS SORTED



12-21

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-21

CRYPTOQUOTE

QOG SLZW NDSAQ J'X LSQ
JLQGAGNQGF JL JN OSANG
AYVJLM. QOYQ'N PGVYBNG J
FSL'Q RLSH QOG OSANGN
DGANSLYZZW. — LYQ RJLM
VSZG

Cryptoquote: SNOWFLAKES
ARE PRETTY PATTERNS ETCHED IN WATER'S
DREAMS. — ANTHONY T. HINCKS

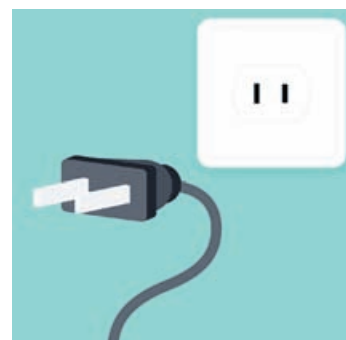
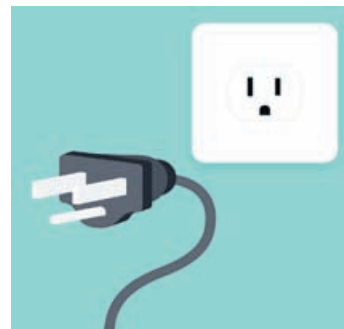
Cruise ship Schedule: December 16 - 22 2024

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
MON	16	ENCHANTED PRINCESS	08.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	17	GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS	08.00	21.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL MAGIC	09.00	22.00	C	1
		NORWEGIAN VIVA	13.00	21.00	I	1
WED	18	NORWEGIAN JEWEL	14.30	21.00	C	1
		FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1
FRI	20	CARNIVAL MIRACLE	09.00	22.00	C	1
SAT	21	STAR CLIPPER	09.00	18.00	I	1
		EXPLORER OF THE SEAS	16.30	****	C	1
		STAR PRIDE	06.00	18.00	B	1
SUN	22	EXPLORER OF THE SEAS - dept.	****	18.00	C	-
		FREEWINDS - DEPT.	****	22.15	E	-

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

Electrical power



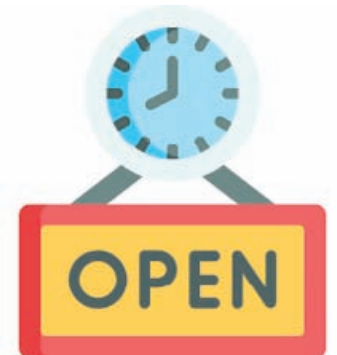
Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply

Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Supermarket hours



Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Safety



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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24/7

The winter solstice is almost here, the Northern Hemisphere's darkest day



Vehicles travel along a street at sunset on the winter solstice in San Francisco, Thursday, Dec. 21, 2023.

Associated Press

By The Associated Press

The winter solstice is Saturday, bringing the shortest day and longest night of the year to the Northern Hemisphere ideal conditions for holiday lights and warm blankets.

For those who would rather have more sunlight, you can try to make your way to the Southern Hemisphere, where it is summer. Or be patient: Starting Sunday, days will get a little bit longer in the Northern Hemisphere every single day until late June.

These annual changes in sunlight as the Earth revolves around the sun have been well known to humans for centuries. Monuments such as Stonehenge in England and the Torreon at Peru's Machu

Picchu were designed in part to align with solstices. Here's what to know about how the Earth's march around the sun splits up the year.

What is the solstice?

As the Earth travels around the sun, it does so at an angle. For most of the year, the Earth's axis is tilted either toward or away from the sun. That means the sun's warmth and light fall unequally on the northern and southern halves of the planet.

The solstices mark the times during the year when the Earth is at its most extreme tilt toward or away from the sun. This means the hemispheres are getting very different amounts of sunlight — and days and nights are at their most un-

equal.

During the Northern Hemisphere's winter solstice, the upper half of the Earth is tilted away from the sun, creating the shortest day and longest night of the year. The winter solstice falls between December 20 and 23..

Meanwhile, at the summer solstice, the Northern Hemisphere is toward the sun, leading to the longest day and shortest night of the year. This solstice falls between June 20 and 22.

What is the equinox?

During the spring and fall equinoxes, the Earth's axis and its orbit line up so that both hemispheres get an equal amount of sunlight.

The word equinox comes from two Latin words meaning equal and night. That's because on the equinox, day and night last almost the same amount of time though one may

get a few extra minutes, depending on where you are on the planet.

The Northern Hemisphere's spring or vernal equinox can land between March 19 and 21, depending on the year. Its fall or autumnal equinox can land between Sept. 21 and 24. □



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2 Bed Oceanside \$26,000
2 Bed Ocean view \$22,500
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3 Bed Ocean view \$36,000
2 Bed WK 51 Ocean view \$65,500
2 Bed WK 52 Ocean View \$65,500
2 Bed WK 7 and 14 - all views

GOLD SEASON

2 Bed Oceanfront \$20,000
2 Bed Oceanside \$15,500
2 Bed Ocean view \$14,500
2 Bed Garden view \$13,000
3 Bed Ocean view \$30,000

Marriott Aruba Ocean Club PLATINUM SEASON

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2 Bed Ocean view \$29,000
1 Bed Ocean front \$23,000
1 Bed Ocean View \$17,000

GOLD SEASON

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2 Bed Ocean view \$17,000
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1 Bed Ocean View \$11,500

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San Nicolas:Tel.584 5712

OTHER

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Urgent Care 586 0448
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EMERGENCY

Police	100
Oranjestad	527 3140
Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

TAXI SERVICES

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Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

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Aruba Airport	524 2424
American Airlines	582 2700
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Jet Blue	588 2244
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How to avoid financial stress during the holiday season

By ADRIANA MORGA

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The holidays are meant to be a time of celebration with family and friends. But they can also bring pressure to spend money on gifts, gatherings and plane tickets home, exacerbated by brand emails, social media influencers and family expectations.

With credit card debt rising and prices for many items still high due to inflation, overspending during the holiday season can add to the financial stress many Americans are already experiencing, said Dr. Marketa Wills, CEO and medical director of the American Psychiatric Association.

"The idea that one is on the hook for buying gifts for all their friends and families adds an enormous amount of stress on someone trying to have a perfect holiday," Wills said.

But there are ways to get through the holidays without spending more than you can afford. From setting expectations with your family to making a budget to gifting experiences rather than things, here are expert recommendations to avoid financial stress this holiday season:

Start with a budget

To avoid overspending on gifts for family and friends, set a specific goal, said Matt Watson, CEO of Origin, a financial planning app. Ask yourself what your spending limit is before you start shopping.

"People get into 'justification mode' where you have a general sense of what you want to spend but then you see this really nice thing and all of the sudden you've done that a few times and you spend twice as much as you thought you might," Watson said.

Watson also recommends that you include in your budget calculations how much you'll pay for taxes and shipping.

Manage expectations with loved ones

In many families, the holidays mean going all out with gift-giving. But this can



Shoppers walk along Fifth Avenue on Nov. 29, 2024, in New York.

quickly become stressful if your finances make it hard to keep up. Managing expectations is key.

"You can avoid feeling inadequate, or like you're not doing a good job, by having an honest conversation about where your finances are," Watson said. Being open about your money can be difficult, but sharing if you are struggling with debt or other financial issues can help family and friends understand that they should prioritize low-cost gifts or activities.

Don't wait until the last minute

Planning your holiday shopping ahead of time can make it easier to stick to your budget.

"When people feel rushed, oftentimes they're going to buy more expensive things," said Watson, who also pointed out that shipping costs increase closer to Christmas.

As you budget for the holidays, make a list of the items you want to purchase and slowly start buying them.

This way, you divide your costs among several paychecks and avoid relying on credit for last-minute expenses.

Get creative

Wills recommends that people opt for homemade

gifts if they want to show appreciation for their loved ones without overspending. Homemade gifts don't always have to be crafts, they can also be actions.

"I will do babysitting for you, I will cook a meal for you," Wills said. "Those kinds of things take a financial pressure off and make for a more joyous holiday season."

In recent years, shopping expert Trae Bodge has noticed that younger people prefer to gift each other experiences rather than items. She recommends finding affordable, fun activities to do with your loved ones.

Examples include going ice skating, hiking or hosting a potluck. You could also gift a photoshoot or framed pictures or digital albums to commemorate happy experiences.

Create your own traditions

Expectations or traditions you grew up with, such as buying expensive gifts for every member of your extended family, can cause stress during the holidays. This is what Bodge refers to as "keeping up with the Joneses," which refers to trying to keep up with the expectations of other people rather than what is realistic for you to spend.

"Sometimes you may have a family member that is very financially well-off and they love to treat you to big, extravagant things. If you're not in that same financial position, you should not feel compelled to return the favor," Bodge said.

When creating your own new traditions, Watson recommends sharing the financial goals you have, such as saving for a house or paying off debt. This will help your loved ones understand why you're looking to limit expenses during the holidays.

Divide spending responsibilities

Wills also recommends cutting costs by being selective with your expenses. For example, when it comes to hosting, even having a small group of people can be very expensive if you're expected to pay for everything. If you're in this situation, you could propose that everyone brings a dish. "Think about having a potluck meal for the holiday. Have everybody bring something to the event to help share the cost," she said.

Communicate your feelings

If you are having financial difficulties, it can help to talk about it with your family and friends.

"Sharing about stress can in and of itself be therapeutic for the individual who may be having concerns for that during the holiday season," Wills said.

Making room to listen to your loved ones' feelings is equally important, she said. And if the holidays are a tough time for you, Wills recommended that you prioritize your mental health and good habits such as resting well and exercising.

Don't be afraid to say no. It's the season where social events are happening every weekend but if they are causing you too much financial stress or hurting your mental health, it's okay to be selective.

Additionally, if you start feeling uncomfortable about certain conversations with your family, Wills recommends you take some time for yourself by taking a walk or removing yourself from the conversation.

Seek professional help if you need it

If you are experiencing mental health struggles, there are several resources you can use to find professional help.

In the U.S., you can dial 211 to speak with a mental health expert, confidentially and for free.

Other mental health resources include:

Veterans Crisis Line: call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Crisis Text Line: Text the word 'Home' to 741-741

The Trevor Lifeline for LGBTQ Youth: 1-866-488-7386

The Trans Lifeline: 1-877-565-8860. □



Don't write off Kirk Cousins just yet despite his benching: Analysis

By **ROB MAADDI**
AP Pro Football Writer

Kirk Cousins didn't forget how to play quarterback. He just didn't do it well enough often enough to keep his job in Atlanta.

Don't write off the veteran just yet.

There's no sugarcoating the way Cousins played over the past five games. He struggled mightily, throwing just one touchdown pass and nine interceptions in that span.

But this was the same guy who had 117.2 passer rating and led the Falcons to a comeback win on the final drive in Week 2 in Philadelphia in just his second start coming back from surgery for a torn Achilles tendon.

Cousins threw for 509 yards and four touchdowns against the Buccaneers on Oct. 3. He had four TD passes and a 145.9 passer rating in another win over Tampa Bay on Oct. 27. He followed that up with three TD passes and a 144.8 rating in a victory against Dallas a week later on Nov. 3. Then came a terrible stretch. That prompted Fal-



Atlanta Falcons quarterback Kirk Cousins (18) throws against the Las Vegas Raiders during the second half of an NFL football game, Monday, Dec. 16, 2024, in Las Vegas.

cons coach Raheem Morris to make the bold decision to bench Cousins for rookie Michael Penix Jr. in the middle of a playoff chase.

The Falcons lost four straight games, including three in a row against teams with tough defenses: Broncos, Chargers, Vikings before beating the Raiders. Cousins only threw 17 passes,

completing 11 for 112 yards, one TD and one interception in a 15-9 win in Las Vegas.

That wasn't good enough to keep him in the lineup. Penix, the eighth overall pick in the NFL draft, gets a soft landing for his first career start. The Falcons (7-7) host the woeful New York Giants (2-12) on Sun-

day. Atlanta could win that game giving the ball to Bijan Robinson and Tyler Allgeier 50 times. Cousins will watch from the sideline as an expensive backup. The Falcons gave the four-time Pro Bowl QB a \$180 million, four-year contract on the first day of free agency. Cousins got \$100 million guaranteed with \$27.5 mil-

lion of that money still owed to him.

His contract, which includes a no-trade clause, complicates a pending divorce from Atlanta. Of course, Cousins is also just one play away from going back under center if Penix gets hurt.

If Penix stays healthy, this still isn't the end for Cousins. Just two weeks ago, Morris was heaping praise on him.

"That guy has carried us," Morris said after Cousins threw four picks in a loss to the Chargers on Dec. 1. "That guy has got us to the point where we're 6-6 and we're first place in the division. Still got everything in front of us, despite what happened today. It's up to us to bounce back and find a way to win football games, and there's no better man than (No.) 18 to go do that for us."

Cousins turns 37 before the start of the 2025 season. He should still have plenty of football left in his right arm. He could veto any trade and force Atlanta to release him. □

Associated Press

Former NFL star Michael Vick officially hired by Norfolk State on Friday

NORFOLK, Va. (AP) — Norfolk State officially named Michael Vick its head football coach Friday, the latest hire of a talented NFL player with no college coaching experience to lead an HBCU program.

Vick's addition was unanimously approved by the school's board of visitors, Norfolk State athletic director Melody Webb said in a release from the university. "I am blessed and humbled by this opportunity to lead, mentor and transform the football program at Norfolk State University," Vick said in a statement.

The 44-year-old Vick announced on his Facebook page on Tuesday night that he has accepted the job. Vick, who starred at Virginia Tech and was selected No. 1 overall by Atlanta in the 2001 NFL draft, becomes the latest pro standout to

lead an HBCU school without any college coaching experience.

NFL Hall of Famer Deion Sanders had coached youth and prep football when he led Jackson State from 2020 to 2022. The team made two Celebration Bowls, a postseason game contested by the champions of two HBCU leagues, the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) and the Southwestern Athletic Conference.

Sanders has coached Colorado the past two seasons.

Eddie George, a Heisman Trophy-winning running back who rushed for 10,441 yards in nine NFL seasons, was hired at Tennessee State in 2021 and led the team to the FCS playoffs this season, finishing 9-4.

Norfolk State is convinced Vick can make similar

strides with its program.

Webb, the school's AD, said Vick was among the greatest athletes to come out of the region and that his hire will attract talented players to the school.

"I am confident that our football program will establish sustainable recruiting pipelines in the state of Virginia and across the country with this hire," she said. The school's release didn't mention Vick's high-profile troubles with a dogfighting ring in the prime of his career with the Falcons.

Vick served 18 months in federal prison after pleading guilty to his role. After his release in 2009, he returned to the NFL and won AP Comeback Player of the Year with the Eagles in 2010, but his best years were behind him.

He retired in 2017 and has advocated against animal

cruelty while also working as an NFL analyst for Fox Sports.

Vick will be formally introduced on campus Monday.

"A prestigious HBCU with a rich athletics history, NSU

provides a tremendous environment for students to reach their full potential on the field and just as importantly, in the classroom," Vick said. "I am honored to join the Norfolk State family." □



Former Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick speaks to members of the media during NFL football training camp at the team's practice facility in Flowery Branch, Ga., Wednesday, Aug. 10, 2022.

Associated Press

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Carter, McGrady and Altidore's new stake in Buffalo Bills brings diversity to NFL owners' table

By JOHN WAWROW

AP Sports Writer

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP)

— The chance to rub shoulders with quarterback Josh Allen and use their Toronto connections to broaden the Buffalo Bills' reach into Canada's largest city wasn't the only thing on the minds of former NBA stars Vince Carter and Tracy McGrady and soccer's Jozy Altidore in purchasing a minority share of the franchise.

More importantly, the trio of successful Black athletes view their crossover sport endeavor as an opportunity to increase diversity at the NFL ownership level. "It's cool to be investing in an NFL franchise, but this is inspiring to so many people that look like us," McGrady



Basketball Hall of Fame Class of 2024 inductee Vince Carter speaks at a hall of fame news conference at Mohegan Sun, Oct. 12, 2024, in Uncasville, Conn.

Associated Press

said during a Zoom call featuring all three on Friday. "This is a barometer for us to do our jobs and be a stand-in for the next phase of ownership, whether it's minority, whether it's majority, whether it's an indi-

vidual," he added. "It's up to us to really carry this the right way and setting an example for the next people coming along." Carter went so far as to mention the impact sisters Venus and Serena Williams

made on Black people in tennis.

"Diversity and inclusion is something that organizations and businesses are trying to accomplish," Carter said.

"It's not just young Black kids and Black girls or whatever, it's for all kids. It's possible if you do it the right way."

Carter and McGrady are cousins who were Toronto Raptors teammates and both inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame. The 35-year-old Altidore is regarded among the top American soccer players of his generation, and was the MLS Cup MVP in helping Toronto FC win its title in 2017.

They're among 10 limited partners who were ap-

proved by the NFL earlier this month to purchase a noncontrolling minority share of the Bills, with team owners Terry and Kim Pegula maintaining about 79% of the team. The trio of athlete's stake represents about a combined 4%.

The NFL's loosening of rules allowing franchises to add limited partners has brought an increasing number of minorities to the owner's table. The Williams sisters own shares in the Miami Dolphins while Magic Johnson recently purchased a stake in the Washington Commanders. Jacksonville's Shad Khan, who is of Pakistani descent, was the NFL's first minority owner, followed by Kim Pegula, who is from South Korea. □

With Roki Sasaki looming, Orioles left \$2.1 million unspent from allotment and Dodgers \$1.9 million



Roki Sasaki, of Japan, pitches during their Pool B game against the Czech Republic at the World Baseball Classic at the Tokyo Dome in Japan Saturday, March 11, 2023.

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The Baltimore Orioles left about \$2.1 million unspent from their 2024 international signing bonus pool allotment and the Los Angeles Dodgers around \$1.9 million in a year there was speculation Japanese pitcher Roki Sasaki would be available.

Major League Baseball's international amateur signing period runs from Jan. 15 to Dec. 15, and Sasaki was not posted until Dec. 8. The 2025 signing period starts Jan. 15 and the 45-day window to reach a deal with the touted 23-year-old runs until Jan. 23, meaning he'll sign within the 2025 period.

The 2025 bonus pools range from \$7,555,500 for eight teams to \$5,146,200 for the Dodgers and San Francisco. The Dodgers are among the many teams in-

terested in Sasaki.

"He's someone that is obviously a major priority for us, and we're going to do whatever we can, and know that there are a lot of other teams that are going to do the exact same thing," Dodgers president of baseball operations Andrew Friedman said during last week's winter meetings. San Diego, which has a \$6,261,600 pool next year, is viewed as a favorite for Sasaki along with the Dodgers.

The pitcher's agent, Joel Wolfe, said he assumed Sasaki will "seriously consider" San Diego, where Japanese pitcher Yu Darvish is on the roster and Hideo Nomo is a special adviser.

"I feel like the organization is in a really good place with Sasaki," Padres manager Mike Shildt said at the winter meetings. □